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ABSTRACT

A project was designed to begin an Elder Abuse Prevention Education initiative specific to northern and Aboriginal needs in northern Saskatchewan, Canada. The key principle in every dimension of the project was getting to know one another and talking with Aboriginal older adults and those who work with them. In early 1993, LaRonge, Saskatchewan, Canada, was chosen as the project site. Edler Abuse Awareness Modules were reviewed by various northern service providers and rejected because they became more inappropriate the farther north one went. Workshops and a positive image poster were chosen as the primary methods of prevention education. In May, an education and action community workshop was held. In June at the Northern Health Care Community Conference, emphasis was given to understanding the violence, including mistreatment and abuse of older adults in the larger social, economic, and historical context. An Elder and Youth Workshop was planned, developed, and held in September. It focused on prevention of abuse and neglect of older adults by celebrating positive relationships between generations and included talking and sharing circles, traditional teachings, a panel discussion taped for local cable television, and preparation and sharing of a traditional feast. The Elders Helping poster was developed in September-October 1993, and distributed. Development of more abuse and mistreatment prevention education for the area was recommended. (Project materials are appended.) (YLB)

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ED 402 448

Seniors' Education Centre

A Prevention Education Project on the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older Adults in Northern Saskatchewan Final Report

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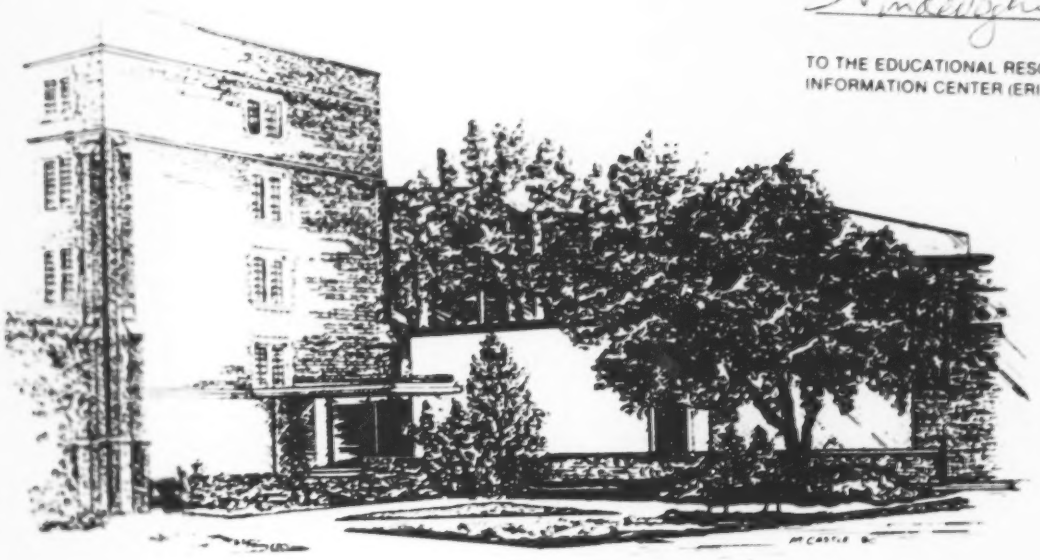

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GA 106 GALLERY BLDG., COLLEGE AVENUE & CORNWALL STREET, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN
CANADA S4S 0A2 PHONE: (306) 585-5816 FAX: (306) 585-5825

FINAL REPORT

A PREVENTION EDUCATION PROJECT ON THE ABUSE AND MISTREATMENT OF OLDER ADULTS IN NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN

The Seniors' Education Centre
University Extension
University of Regina

Funded by
Family Violence Prevention Division
Health Canada

Project Coordinator
Ruth N. Blaser
March - September, 1993.

Acknowledgements

It is with a deep sense of respect that the Seniors' Education Centre and project coordinator Ruth Blaser acknowledge the many northern people, particularly women, for the love and leadership so freely and fully given in their efforts to help intergenerational healing occur in their communities.

During one of the prevention education workshops in LaRonge there was considerable discussion about where violence is rooted in society. The Aboriginal women talked about colonization and assimilation, which resulted in many of the valued traditions in Aboriginal cultures being lost. For example, for some people respect for self and one another, including the elders, has been lost or eroded. Aboriginal communities in Northern Saskatchewan are beginning to struggle with what it means to recover pride, identity and meaning in themselves and in their unique culture and traditions. One of the questions that is being asked is how can intergenerational healing occur? Sylvia Maracle has written a helpful article in Vis a Vis A National Newsletter on Family Violence, Spring 93. This article called a Historical Viewpoint is attached in Appendix A.

Special thanks to Maryann MacKenzie, Sally Milne, Jackie Ballantyne, Theresa Woods, Theresa Driediger, and Brenda Green of LaRonge for their involvement in the project. Special thanks also to Jessie Ross of the Brandon Friendship Centre and Project Aware, an elder abuse prevention project, for her involvement in the Elders and Youth Workshop.

Thanks to Kip Veale of Health and Social Services in Whitehorse, Yukon. Kip helped us to see that this project did not fit the community's current needs; thus it was decided to redirect the project to Northern Saskatchewan rather than Whitehorse.

Dr. John Oussoren, Director of the Seniors Education Centre, provided helpful supervision and colleagueship throughout the project. My colleagues at the Seniors' Education Centre, -- Stan Vindevoghel, Diane Mullan, Heather Cosman and Mitzi Krasilowez -- have been, as usual, helpful, supportive and just plain fun to work with.

Thanks also to Kataline Kennedy of Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada, for assisting project funding and providing guidance along the way.

Background

In March 1993, the Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada made short-term project funding available to the Seniors' Education Centre (SEC), University Extension, University of Regina.

The specific purpose of the project was to begin an Elder Abuse Prevention Education initiative specific to northern and Aboriginal needs.

While the SEC has been involved in a number of prevention education and awareness building projects related to the abuse and mistreatment of older adults, we had not worked with the unique focus of aboriginal and northern needs and the particular cultural and social-economic context.

In June 1993, at the Northern Health Care Conference, much emphasis was given to understanding violence, including the mistreatment and abuse of older adults in the larger social, economic and historical context. Many of the leaders said the solutions to the problems of violence also need to be seen in a holistic context of recovery and healing for individuals and communities. Speaker after speaker stressed the importance of First Nations people solving their problems in their own ways.

Participation in the Northern Health Care Conference was very instructive for the project coordinator, in that the principles of building relationships and communities of trust and healing were strong and well articulated. Throughout this project the emphasis was on developing educational workshops through a process of getting to know people and taking time to build relationships. As that happened, we were able to work together to find ways to develop prevention education related to this very difficult issue.

Project Activities

Getting to know one another and talking with Aboriginal older adults and those who work with them was the key principle in every dimension of this project.

January - March 1993

Conversations and negotiations were held as to where the site of the project should be. Initially, responding to a Yukon Health & Social Services staff request, it was proposed by the Seniors' Education Centre and Family Violence Prevention Division that the project site be the Yukon. Upon further consultation and reflection with Kip Veale of Yukon Health and Social Services in Whitehorse, it was decided that this project did not meet with their communities' current needs.

March-April

The SEC then approached Brenda Green of Northern Mental Health about the possibility of LaRonge being the site of this project. Ms. Green invited the project coordinator to a LaRonge Inter Agency committee meeting in early April 1993. At that meeting it was decided the project site would be LaRonge. The Inter Agency committee provided the necessary network contacts in order to determine who was interested in working on the project.

April

Elder Abuse Awareness Modules were reviewed by a variety of northern service providers. The purpose of the review was to determine the usefulness of the modules for education in a northern context. The feedback ranged from very useful and useable to not useful at all. It was decided that for many northern health and social services providers the module is useful as is. However, the farther north one goes, the more inappropriate the module becomes. For many Reserve communities the module was not useable at all, because of its language (French or English) and because of the educational/English or French literacy level that is assumed.

With this feedback it was decided not to attempt to modify, translate or adjust the existing Elder Abuse Awareness Module. Rather it was decided that the primary method of prevention education would be through workshops and by developing a positive image poster.

May

An Education and Action Community Workshop was held in LaRonge, plus interviews with the Northerner and Keewatin Country, CBC radio (see Appendix B).

June

The project coordinator participated in the Northern Health Care Conference held in Prince Albert. Theresa Woods of the Aboriginal Women's Council provided accompaniment and introduced the project worker to many northerners involved in health and recovery work. It was significant to participate in the conference and to learn about the vision of northern health. Family violence, including abuse and neglect of older adults, is understood in the larger social context. Many people talked about the vision of wellness, which includes returning to the values of respect, caring and sharing and using these values in the political process.

July and August

An Elder and Youth Workshop was planned and developed.

September

Elder and Youth Workshop was held September 13-16.

The workshop took place at Mikisiw School, the alternate high school on the Lac LaRonge Reserve. Originally the venue was to be the Senator Miles Venne elementary school. Changing the location of the workshop to Mikisiw school was helpful in that it offered the opportunity for teenagers to take part.

The workshop focused on prevention of abuse and neglect of older adults by celebrating positive relationships between the generations. It included talking and sharing circles, traditional teachings, a panel discussion which was taped for local cable television, and elders and youth working together to prepare and share a traditional feast. During the two-day workshop, participation varied from 12-30 people.

One of the elders at the workshop was 87-year-old Maryann MacKenzie who has lived on the trap line most of her life and speaks only Cree. Her daughter, Sally Milne, a teacher and artist in the tradition of birch bark biting, translated. The photo of Maryann McKenzie, which was used for the Elders Helping Poster was taken during the workshop.

Poster Development and Distribution

The Elders Helping poster was developed in September and October. The large posters, and a postcard version of it, were distributed to a wide variety of northern and southern service provider agencies, Aboriginal bands in northern Saskatchewan, and all seniors' organizations and clubs in the province. The response to the poster has been very positive, especially from northern bands (see Appendix C for poster and cover letter).

Recommendations

1. More work needs to be done in developing prevention education on the abuse and mistreatment of older adults in a northern and Aboriginal context.

2. Funding for such work should go directly to a northern and/or Aboriginal agency.

3. The SEC could provide consultation, and work with or for the Aboriginal agency in designing and delivering the project.

4. Elder and youth workshops, focusing on positive intergenerational experiences and creating positive images, met with a positive and enthusiastic response. Funding should be considered for developing and implementing other such workshops.

5. It is crucial to work in ways that are respectful of and consistent with Aboriginal cultures. Taking time to develop relationships and credibility is essential.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Seniors' Education Centre I would like to thank the people of northern Saskatchewan and the Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada, for the opportunity to begin this much needed work. May it continue in ways that help individuals and communities heal and progress on the journey toward wholeness.

A Historical Viewpoint, written by Sylvia Maracle.

"Vis à Vis," A National Newsletter on Family Violence,

Spring 93.

Excerpts:

In the summer of 1991, the Government of Ontario and eight provincial or territorial Aboriginal organizations based in Ontario designed a strategy to address Aboriginal family violence. More that 3,000 respondents were involved in the community consultation phase, and all reported being victims of violence. From the work of these organizations, a definition of Aboriginal family violence was created:

"Aboriginal people in Ontario define family violence as a consequence of colonization, forced assimilation, and cultural genocide; the learned negative, cumulative, multi-generational actions, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviourial patterns practised by one or more people that weaken or destroy the harmony and well-being of an Aboriginal individual, family, extended family, community or nations."

"Throughout our work in addressing family violence, we strive to return our people to a time where everyone had a place in the circle and was valued. Recovering our identity will contribute to healing ourselves; healing will require us to rediscover who we are. We cannot look outside for our self-image. We need to rededicate ourselves to understanding our traditional ways. In our songs, ceremonies, language and relationships lie the instructions and direction to recovery."

"We must avoid a pan-Indian approach. The issues of violence in our communities are diverse and so are our own cultural ways. It will be a long journey to recovery. The East, South, West and North all must develop their own processes of healing--as must urban and reserve. This must be done if we are to return once more as a people without violence."

An Education and Action Workshop

on the

Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults

will be held on

May 4, 1993

2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

at

The Mamawintoutaan Centre,

La Ronge, Saskatchewan

The agenda will consist of community conversations about:

1. Needs specific to Northern Saskatchewan related to educations about, and prevention of, the abuse and neglect of older adults.
2. Identifying resources that are available and those that are not available.
3. Next steps in addressing the issue.

. Aboriginal and non-aboriginal seniors as well as service providers and others who are interested and/or involved in this issue are especially encouraged to attend.

. This workshop is sponsored by the Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina and the La Ronge Interagency Group.

. For more information please call Ruth Blaser, (306) - 779-4729, Project Coordinator, Seniors' Education Centre, University of Regina. Call collect if necessary.

. Admission Free

. Funding assistance from Family Violence Prevention Division, Health & Welfare Canada.

An Education and Action Workshop on the Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults

Mamawintoutaan Centre

La Ronge, May 4, 1993.

1. Participants list see attached.

2. Workshop goals:

   2.1 Community conversations about needs specific to Northern Saskatchewan related to education about, and prevention of, the abuse and neglect of older adults.

   2.2 Identifying resources that are available and those that are not available for education and prevention of abuse and neglect of older adults.

   2.3 Next steps in addressing this issue.

3. Agenda:

   3.1 Introduction to this project sponsored by University Extension, Seniors' Education Centre and funded by Family Violence Prevention Division of Health and Welfare Canada.

   3.2 Introduction to one another around the table.

   3.3 Introduction to the issue.

   3.4 Looking at the needs specific to Northern Saskatchewan related to education about and prevention the abuse and neglect of older adults.

   3.5 Identifying resources/services that are and are not available for education, intervention and prevention.

   3.6 Next steps in addressing the issue.

4. Issues raised in the discussion:

4.1 Root causes of violence:

There was considerable discussion about where violence is rooted in society. The Aboriginal women talked about the effects of colonization and assimilation resulting in many of the valued traditions in Aboriginal cultures being lost. For example respect for self and one another including the elders has been lost or eroded. Aboriginal communities in Northern Saskatchewan are beginning to struggle with what it means to recover pride, identity and meaning in themselves and in their unique culture and traditions. One of the questions that is being asked is how can intergenerational healing occur?

The focus of the Spring 93 *Vis a Vis National Newsletter on Family Violence* is Aboriginal perspectives on family violence.

Excerpts from an article written by Sylvia Maracle were shared.

4.2 Stress of Caregivers:

One of the participants talked about her experience as a primary care giver for her husband for four years. She talked about her need to survive in the midst of this very demanding time in her life and how public opinion often went against her when she took time to look after herself. For example when she took time out some people would say just one word of disapproval, "again". She talked about the importance of homecare services and said that without it she would not have survived.

The group talked about the importance of providing strong homecare and community support for caregivers and doing public education on caregiving. i.e. The importance of community and self care for caregivers; a public education campaign of services available for caregivers.

4.3 Breaking the silence:

One of the participant is a registered nurse who has worked in northern hospitals, she talked about the fact that more people are talking about the abuse and neglect of older adults and how this is an important first step in addressing the problem.

5. Resources and Services available and not available in the La Ronge area.

5.1 Resources that are available:

* Homecare was named as a valued resources in this community. One of the participants said "without homecare I wouldn't be here today." Homecare services need to be expanded as the province moves through Health Care reform.

* Low income Seniors' housing is available

* Lac La Ronge Band has a homecare program which includes some maintenance workers.

5.2 Resources needed in the community:

* more low income housing for Seniors'.

* other housing options for older people including level 3 and 4 care.

* independent but connected to family unit housing, "granny flats".

* Adults day care.

* Respite care for caregivers.

* community education about caregiving ie: "It's okay to ask for respite care."

* community education about homecare services that are available and how to fill out the forms. One woman said that many older people are afraid of filling out forms.

* more education on benefits that are available for veterans.

* recovering aboriginal traditions.

* opportunity for spiritual growth...respect.

6. Closing comments:

By way of closing the workshop each person in the circle had an opportunity to comment, this is a sense of what was said:

"this is a multi cultural town, we need a multi cultural approach to addressing issues of violence."

"where do we go from here?"

"we need a stronger sense of community and respect for diversity"

"good starting point"

"Elders need to be asked about what they need"

"there will be another gathering of northern elders this summer, these are very positive gatherings for helping to recover the respected place of older people according to Aboriginal traditions."

Elder abuse workshop

The La Ronge Interagency group and the University of Regina Seniors' Education Centre presented a workshop on Tuesday May 4, 1993 at the Mamawintoutaan Centre on Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults. Eleven participants attended representing a variety of agencies and services in the La Ronge area.

Ruth Blaser, the facilitator, began with a definition of elder abuse being an act, committed or omitted by another person that results in harm to or jeopardizes the well-being or safety of an elder person.

Blaser explained that there are different kinds of abuse ranging from physical abuse as well as verbal and material abuse to violation of rights and neglect.

The majority of the abused elderly are females over the age of 75, frail with physical and or mental difficulties who are often unable to provide for their own needs or protection. They are usually living with their abusers and are frequently reluctant or unwilling to report that abuse has actually occurred.

Blaser explained that many elderly people don't report abuse. They fear more abuse and the loss of the person that looks after them, they worry about the consequences of reporting, they often do not understand what is going on and they fear loss of independence.

The public does not often see elder abuse for a number of reasons. It's not reported very often and there is a lack of awareness on the part of the public. Society believes in the sanctity of the family and that all families have the right to privacy. Often the use of force in certain circumstances is seen as all right. There are a lack of options for dealing with an abused elderly person.

The participants looked at the resources for elderly people available in the community and spoke highly of the work done by homecare facilities in the area which includes homemaking services as well as supervision of elderly people if their caregiver leaves for a short period of time.

Participants addressed the need for more low income housing units for seniors as well as level 3 &4 facilities in the La Ronge area so the elderly do not have to be moved out of the area for advanced care.

Blaser will present a report of the meeting to the Community Wellness Committee in La Ronge for their information.

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UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

SENIORS' EDUCATION CENTRE

November 1993

The Seniors' Education Centre, (SEC) University of Regina, University Extension is pleased to provide you with the **Elder's Helping Poster and Postcards**. **Elder's Helping** grew out of a SEC short term educational project on the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older Adults.

The focus of this project was to work with northern Aboriginal people to explore ways to develop prevention education on the issue of abuse and neglect of older adults.

This project was assisted with funding from Family Violence Prevention Division, Health Canada.

It is with a sense of respect that we thank Maryann MacKenzie of Northern Saskatchewan for allowing the use of this photo for the poster.

We have a limited number of complimentary posters and postcards, additional posters $3.00, postcards 3 for $1.00. For additional copies of the **Elder's Helping** poster or postcards, for the Final Project Report or for further information on educational resources related to the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older Adults please contact:

The Seniors' Education Centre
University of Regina
University Extension
College Avenue and Cornwall Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S OA2
Ruth Blaser, Project Coordinator
Phone 779-4729 or Fax 779-4825

GA 106 GALLERY BLDG., COLLEGE AVENUE & CORNWALL STREET, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN.
CANADA S4S 0A2 PHONE: (306) 779-4816 FAX: (306) 779-4825